

10/538875  
JC17 Rec'd PCT/PTO 14 JUN 2005

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please cancel claims 1-12 without prejudice or disclaimer, and substitute new  
Claims 13-24 therefor as follows:

Claims 1-12 (cancelled).

13. (New) A modular apparatus for data communication between a distribution  
network and a residential network, comprising:

a first device having a first connector firmly associated thereon, adapted to  
interface a distribution network;

at least one second device having at least one second connector firmly  
associated thereon, adapted to interface a residential network and to be mechanically  
and electrically connected to said first device; and

at least one interconnecting device adapted to lock said first device and  
said at least one second device to each other and to activate electrical supply between  
said first device and said at least one second device, said at least one interconnecting  
device defining a first operative configuration wherein said first and at least one second  
devices are unlocked so as to be disconnectable from each other and wherein the  
electrical supply between said modules is prevented, and a second operative  
configuration wherein said first and at least one second devices are locked so as to be  
not disconnectable from each other and wherein the electrical supply between said  
modules is activated,

said at least one interconnecting device comprising a locking element  
which is slidable between a first operative position corresponding to said first operative

configuration of the apparatus and a second operative position corresponding to said second operative configuration of the apparatus.

14. (New) The modular apparatus according to claim 13, further comprising:  
a first seat for said locking element formed on said first device; and  
a second seat for said locking element formed on said at least one second device, wherein said second seat slidably houses said locking element and said first seat is adapted to house a free end of said locking element when said locking element is at said second operative position.

15. (New) The modular apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising a pin integrally formed with said first device and a hole formed into said locking element, wherein said hole slidably houses said pin and comprises a narrower end portion adapted to cooperate with said pin when said locking element is at said second operative position, thus securing said first device to said locking element.

16. (New) The modular apparatus according to claim 13, further comprising a switch adapted to be switched on by said locking element when said locking element is at said second operative position thus activating the electrical supply between said first and at least one second devices, and to be switched off by said locking element when said locking element is moved away from said second operative position thus deactivating the electrical supply between said first and least one second devices.

17. (New) The modular apparatus according to claim 13, further comprising a first processor housed into said first device, a second processor housed into said at least one second device and a data transmitting/receiving line between said first and second processors.

18. (New) The modular apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said first processor is a microprocessor, said second processor is a microcontroller and said data transmitting/receiving line is a serial connection line.

19. (New) The modular apparatus according to claim 13, further comprising a first processor housed into said first device and a contactless data transmitting/receiving device between said first microprocessor and said at least one second device.

20. (New) The modular apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said first processor is a network processor and said contactless data transmitting/receiving device comprises a reader chip housed into said first device and a memory chip housed into said at least one second device.

21. (New) A method for communicating data between a distribution network and a residential network, comprising the steps of:

interfacing a distribution network by a first device having a first connector;

interfacing a residential network by at least one second device having at least one second connector;

electrically and mechanically connecting said first device to said at least one second device; and

locking said first device and said at least one second device to each other and activating the electrical supply between said first device and said at least one second device by means of at least one interconnecting device, the step of locking said first device and at least one second device to each other and activating the electrical supply between said first device and said at least one second device comprising the steps of:

slidably moving at least one locking element from a first operative position wherein said first and at least one second devices are unlocked and disconnectable from each other, and the electrical supply between said first and at least one second devices is deactivated, to a second operative position wherein said first and at least one second devices are locked and not disconnectable from each other and the electrical supply between said first and at least one second devices is activated.

22. (New) The method according to claim 21, wherein the step of slidably moving said locking element from said first operative position to said second operative position comprises the step of switching on, when the locking element is at said second operative position, a switch which in turn activates the electrical supply between said first and at least one second devices.

23. (New) The method according to claim 22, wherein the step of switching on said switch further comprises the steps of:

activating the electrical supply between said first device and said at least one second device;

testing said at least one second device for identification thereof by means of the first device, and

if said test gives a positive result, enabling the data communication between said first and at least one second devices; and

if said test gives a negative result, disabling the data communication between said first and at least one second devices.

24. (New) A local communication network which allows interconnection of residential appliances, comprising a modular apparatus according to any one of the claims from 13 to 20.